Reclassification of Moderate Ozone Nonattainment Areas for 2008 Ozone Standard

EPA recently posted 8-hour ozone design values (DV) for the years 2015 - 2017. Design values are used to determine whether an air quality standard is being met. The 8-hour ozone DV for regulatory monitors with acceptable data are calculated from the annual 4th highest daily maximum 8-hour concentrations, averaged over 3 years. The 8-hour ozone DV for an area is the highest DV for regulatory monitors in the area. The 8-hour ozone DVs are posted at: https://www.epa.gov/air-trends/air-quality-design-values. The 2015-2017 DV for the Houston area is 81 parts per billion (ppb) which exceeds the 2008 ozone standard of 75 ppb.

EPA is working on a Federal Register notice proposing reclassification of the Houston area and approximately 8 other Moderate ozone nonattainment areas that missed the 2008 ozone standard attainment deadline and did not qualify for a 1-year extension of the deadline. The notice would propose:

- Reclassification of the areas to Serious.
- Setting the deadline for a new SIP submittal.

Publication of the proposal in the Federal Register will start a 30-day comment period.

Implementation of the 2015 Ozone Standard

Previously EPA reported that 6 Houston area counties were classified as part of a Marginal nonattainment area for the 2015 ozone standard of 70 ppb. The final rule designating nonattainment areas for the 2015 ozone standard was published in the Federal Register on Monday, June 4. The effective date of the final rule is August 3. A separate final rule designating San Antonio’s Bexar County as a Marginal nonattainment area was published in the Federal Register on July 25. With an August 3, 2018 effective date, the attainment deadline for the Houston area to meet the 2015 ozone standard is August 3, 2021.

EPA has submitted a final rule for implementing the 2015 ozone standard to the Office of Management and Budget for review. EPA hopes to publish the final rule this year.

The expected SIP revisions and submission deadlines for the Houston area are:

- An emissions inventory of ozone precursors (VOC and NOx) due August 3, 2020.
- Confirmation that the requirement for large stationary point sources to certify their emission reports is met due August 3, 2020.
- Confirmation that the requirement for nonattainment new source review provisions are met due August 3, 2021.